

CONTROLLER STEVE WESTLY

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

300 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814
916.445.2636
www.controller.ca.gov

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CONTACT: RUSS LOPEZ
916-445-2636

Westly Takes Fight Against Offshore Oil Drilling to Nation's Capital

Federal Energy Bill Threatens Areas Along California's Coast

WASHINGTON, D.C. – State Controller Steve Westly today met with environmental leaders in the nation's capital to call on members of Congress to reject a provision in the congressional energy bill that would allow oil exploration off California's coast.

"We're sending a message that we won't let our pristine coastline be turned into an oil field," said Controller Westly. "California's 1,200-mile long coast is the lifeblood of our economy – in order to stay open for business, our coast needs to stay closed to exploration."

The U.S. Senate is expected to vote by the end of the week on the federal energy bill that would allow seismic survey ships to begin intensive exploration for oil and gas off coastal shores. Documented scientific evidence shows that the underwater explosions used by the ships damage fisheries and marine mammals.

"Given the choice, Americans prefer that their beaches remain free of oil spills and drilling rigs," said Jim Presswood, an energy advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Now that the Senate has ignored their wishes, we're left with an energy bill that threatens our fragile coastlines with damaging seismic testing and that leaves our beloved beaches vulnerable to harmful oil and gas drilling."

An amendment by Sen. Mel Martinez (R-Florida) and Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Florida) to prevent seismic exploration beneath the nation's Outer Continental Shelf failed yesterday by a 44 to 52 Senate vote.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, League of Conservation Voters, US Public Interest Research Group, and Defenders of Wildlife joined with Westly today to call for protecting the moratorium on offshore drilling.

"We are proud to join State Controller Westly in the fight against efforts to open our coastlines to offshore oil drilling," said League of Conservation Voters Legislative Director Tiernan Sittenfeld. "As the debate on national energy legislation moves forward, LCV will continue to work with like-minded public officials in urging Congress to remove any measures that could lead to offshore drilling."

Over the past several months, Controller Westly has worked with environmental leaders to urge members of California's Congressional delegation and state elected leaders to speak with one voice against offshore oil drilling.

California's coastline helped to attract 300 million tourists last year from around the nation and the world. Coastal businesses comprise one of the healthiest fiscal engines of the state's economy, adding to the total \$82.5 billion the tourism industry produced in 2004.

The House passed its version of the energy bill in April. Following the Senate vote, the Conference Committee on the energy bill will be scheduled.

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